THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to(d) Subsequent to acceptance of recommendations dated 28.08.2007 of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), *inter-alia,* that there should be no cap on the number of access provider in any service area, 120 new Unified Access Services (UAS) licences have been granted so far. Viewing the present tele-density of around 25, there are ample opportunities abailable to the new telecom licensees. Any such forecast by the existing telecom licensee(s) that new telecom licensees will collapse in three years, appears to be only speculative.

Broadband Connectivity

2187. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that broadband connectivity is very essential for the development of the country as a knowledge based society;

(b) if so, the steps taken and proposed to be taken by Government thereon;

(c) the details of the broadband subscribers in the country as on 31 st December 2007, State-wise;

(d) whether China is far ahead of our country in broadband connectivity; and

(e) if so, the steps proposed to be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir. Government is very much aware that broadband connectivity is very essential for the development the country as a knowledge based society.

(b) Some of the major steps taken and proposed to be taken by the Government to proliferate broadband in the country are given in Statement-I *(See* below).

(c) There were 30,19,521 broadband subscribers as on 31 st December 2007. State-wise details of Broadband Subscribers are given in Statement-N *(See* below).

(d) As per the information available on Internet, China is ahead of our country in broadband connectivity.

(e) Steps for proliferation of broadband have been summarized in Part (b) above.

Statement-I

Details regarding some of the major steps taken and proposed to be taken to proliferate broadband in the country

1. Broadband policy has been announced by the Government during 2004 for accelerated growth of Broadband applications, contributing growth of GDP and enhancement in quality of life through societal applications including tele-education, tele-medicine, e-governance, entertainment as well as employment generation.
2. In order to bring provisioning of broadband connectivity to rural areas under the purview of Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), the Indian Telegraph Rules

have been amended, stream IV has been added under the title "Provision of broadband connectivity to villages in a phased manner". The USOF is working on a scheme for providing Financial assistance by way of subsidy for the broadband active infrastructure such as BTS (Base Transceiver Station) and by utilizing the existing passive infrastructure available with the Telecom service providers.

3. State owned Public Sector Unit, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited has identified around 25,576 rural exchanges and has placed order of 1.6 million ports for deployment of broadband services and rural areas.
4. The Government has approved a Common Services Centres (CSCs) Scheme for providing support for establishing 100,000 Common Services Centers in 600,000 villages of India. The Scheme, as approved by the Government of India, envisions CSCs as the front-end delivery points for Government, private and social sector services to rural citizens of India, in an integrated manner. The objective is to develop a platform that can enable Government, private and social sector organizations to align their social and commercial goals for the benefit of the rural population in the remotest corners of the country through a combination of IT-based as well as non-IT-based servcies.
5. It is proposed to setup a National Knowledge network for providing broadband connectivity to knowledge Institutions in the country.
6. Department of Information Technology (DIT) has been promoting research and development in the area of Convergence, Communication and Broadband Technology as one of its major activities. Under this programme during the last three years, eight projects covering the area of Broadband Technologies have been funded.
7. Various exemptions in duties and taxes have been proposed in the Budget 2008-09 for Electronics/IT Industry.

Statement-II

Details of State-wise Broadband subscribers as on 31st December 2007

Sl.No.	State/Telecom Circle	Broadband Subscribers
1	2	3
1	Andaman & Nicobar	964
2	Andhra Pradesh	23409
3	Assam	12475
4	Bihar (including Jharkhand)	37278
5	Delhi*	40905
6	Gujarat	18862
7	Haryana	40218
8	Himachal Pradesh	6693
9	Jammu & Kashmir	9597
10	Karnataka	33193
11	Kerala	14030
12	Maharashtra (including Goa)	65430
13	Madhya Pradesh (including	80738

*Includes Noida, Gurgaon, Ghaziabad and Faridabad